

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOL REPEAT ISLAMABAD 2682 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 19 MAR.

QUOTE

S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 2682

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MNUC, PK, US, FR
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR ISSUE: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO

REF: STATE 059713

1. I REQUESTED AN APPOINTMENT WITH BHUTTO IN COMPLIANCE WITH STATE 059713 AND RECEIVED MY APPOINTMENT WITHIN AN HOUR. WE HAD A LENGTHY SESSION, INTERESTING FOR ITS IMPRESSIONISTICS, BUT SUBSTANTIALLY INCONCLUSIVE. WE EVENTUALLY BOTH AGREED TO LABEL OUR DISCUSSIONS AS PRELIMINARY AND HAVE ANOTHER MEETING AS SOON AS I DESIRED, FOLLOWING TALKS I WILL HAVE THIS COMING WEEK WITH

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AZIZ AHMED AND AGHA SHAHI. FOR THE SAKE OF COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING I LEFT A COYP OF MY TALKING POINTS CONTAINED IN ABOVE REFTEL FOR HIS CONTINUED REFERENCE.

2. IN MY OPINION BHUTTO HAS EITHER SOMEWHAT HARDENED HIS POSITION IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAINITIES FOLLOWING HIS ELECTION OR, ALTERNATIVELY, WAS ILL-PREPARED MENTALLY TO READILY HANDLE THIS EXTERNAL MATTER EASILY IN VIEW OF HIS TOTAL ABSORPTION ON INTERNAL MATTERS DURIN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD NOT MISUNDERSTAND THE LACK OF REPLY TO

DATE TO HIS LETTER ON NUCLEAR MATTERS. HE SAID IT WAS A NICE LETTER, AND HE MEANT NO DISCOURTESY, BUT IT HAD NOT BEEN A TIME WHEN HE COULD GET HIS ADVISERS AND CABINET TOGETHER FOR A CONSIDERED REPLY. I TOLD HIM I HAD EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE WELL UNDERSTOOD.

3. THIS MESSAGE WILL BE IN TWO PARTS. THE FIRST PART WILL COVER OUR TALK ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION HERE AND PART W WILL DEAL WITH OUR DISCUSSIONS ON NUCLEAR MATTERS THEY ARE BEING SENT TOGETHER AS THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE A BEARING ON EACH OTHER -- AND MAY IN FACT BE INSEPARABLE.

PART 1

4. EARLY IN OUR CONVERSATION BHUTTO TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS INTERNAL SITUATION. HE REMINDED ME THAT IN A PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERSATION A LONG TIME AGO HE HAD TOLD ME THAT ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN SEEMED TO HAVE A WAY OF SHAKING THE EARTH, MENTIONING SPECIFICALLY THE TURBULENCE SURROUNDING THE 1945 PRE-PARTITION ELECTIONS AND THE 1970 ELECTIONS WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO THE DISMEMBERMENT OF PAKISTAN. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT HE SAID THAT HE HAD TOLD ME THAT NO ELECTIONS MIGHT BE BETTER THAN BAD ELECTIONS. NOW THEY HAD GONE THROUGH A THOROUGHLY BAD ELECTION, WITH A CAMPAIGN THAT WAS NEGATIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE.

5. BHUTTO SAID THE NEGATIVE STRIDENT VOICES OF THE OPPOSITION HAD INDEED MET WITH A RESPONSE AMONG THE MASSES. IT HAD BEEN CLEAR TO SECRET

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HIM, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE LAST FEW DAYS BEFORE THE POLLS, THE TREND WAS BEGINNING TO SHIFT BACK TO REALITY, AND THAT HE AND HIS PARTY WERE BEGINNING TO DO MUCH BETTER. HE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD BEEN OUT AMONG THE CROWDS AND THAT HE COULD SENSE THE MOOD WAS CHANGING TO AN EVEN GREATER EXTENT THAN CONFIRMED BY REPORTS OF PARTY WORKERS HE RECEIVED. HE ASKED IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN HE HAD PASSED THE WORD TO HIS SUPPORTERS THAT HE WANTED NO FUNNY BUSINESS AT THE POLLS AND THAT HE WOULD BE CONTENT TO LIVE WITH THE SIMPLE MAJORITY HE THOUGHT HE WOULD RECEIVE. HE SAID HE TOLD THEM AT THAT TIME TO FORGET HIS PREVIOUS DESIRE FOR A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, AS HE COULD NOT READILY THINK OF ANY MODERN HONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS OF A PARTISAN NATURE THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR HIS SECOND TERM. HE SAID HIS LAST TELEPHONE CALLS OF THIS NATURE WERE AT 3 A.M. ON MARCH 5, TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION.

6. BHUTTO SAID WHEN THE RETURNS BEGAN TO COME IN OVER TELEVISION HE WAS SHOCKED AND ANGRY AND BEGAN CALLING SUBORDINATES ASKING "WHAT THE HELL HAD THEY DONE," AS SOME RETURNS WERE OBVIOUSLY PHONY.

7. IN A PHILOSOPHICAL MOOD BHUTTO REMINDED ME THAT ELECTIONS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN. PARTY WORKERS, THE RICH, THE INFLUENTIAL ON ALL SIDES STRIVE TO ENHANCE

THEIR POSITION. HE SAID IT WAS NOT A SITUATION THAT COULD BE ENTIRELY CONTROLLED, AS IS BEING CLAIMED. (ALL OF THE ABOVE, OFCOURSE, IS NEITHER ENTIRELY TRUE NOR ENTIRELY FALSE. I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT BHUTTO DID IN FACT INSTRUCT HIS UNDER-LINGS TO ASSURE HIS VICTORY, BUT WAS INDEED ANGERED BY THE DISTORTED RESULT THEIR ZEAL PRODUCED. HAVING BEEN ACCREDITED TO NASSER, NE WIN, DAOUD, MARCOS, AND BHUTTO, IT IS ALL TOO OBVIOUS TO ME THAT STRONG-MAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS, TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THEIR OWN POSITION, DO IN FACT OFTEN ATTEMPT TO CARRY OUT THE SLIGHTEST AFFIRMATIVE NOD OF THE BOSS WITH EXCESSES WHICH IN FACT SURPRISED AND DISPLEASED THE BOSS HIMSELF. ALSO THERE IS A TENDENCY IN SUCH A SYSTEM FOR SUPPORTERS TO ANTICIPATE

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ACTIONS WHICH THEY BELIEVE WOULD PLEASE THE MAN AT THE CENTER OF THE POWER TO ENHANCE THEIR POSITION. THERE IS ALSO A VYING AMONG ONE ANOTHER TO SEE WHO CAN PROVE MOST EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE IN THIS TYPE OF PRACTICE.)

8. BHUTTO TWICE TOLD ME HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THINGS COULD RETURN TO NORMAL IN PAKISTAN, BUT I DID NOT SENSE COMPLETE CONVICTION IN HIS REMARKS. THE SECOND TIME HE DID SO HE SAID OF COURSE THERE COULD BE HUMAN ERROR, AND THEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE LACK OF EXPERIENCE AND VARIOUS LEANINGS OF THE NINE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND LEADERS IN RATHER GRAPHIC TERMS. HE SAID IF THESE "SMALL MEN" SUCCEEDED IN THE DESTABILIZATION OF PAKISTAN IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR THE COUNTRY AND OF COURSE HAVE AN EFFECT ON AREA STABILITY. BUTTO THEN TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT, THROUGH REASON, TO BRING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS. HE SAID HE HAD ALREADY PROMISED THAT AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION COULD BE MADE, TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN THREE TO SIX MONTHS, ON ALLEGATIONS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT RIGGING, AND THE RESULTS COULD BE JUDGED BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE NO DISTRESS IF QUITE A NUMBER OF THE SEATS WERE ACTUALLY FINALLY JUDGED IN FAVOR OF THE OPPOSITION.

9. BHUTTO SAID THE OPPOSITION HAD ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS ON THEIR SIDE AND BOASTED OF U.S. HELP IN THEIR COAMPAIGN. HE WENT INTO A FEW SPECIFICS OF THIS AND SAID HE COULD PROVIDE MORE. CURRENTLY HE SAID THE OPPOSITION WAS MAKING CONSIDERABLE HEADWAY IN THE BAZAAR RUMOR CIRCUIT WITH THE ALLEGATION THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS HOLDING UP ITS CONGRATULATIONS TO HIM IN AN ATTEMPT TO FURTHER DISCREDIT HIM AND TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE UNITED STATES NO LONGER CONSIDERS HIM A LEGITIMATE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. HE SAID TWO OF OUR OFFICERS WERE BEING QUOTED TO THIS EFFECT. HE ADDED THAT, WHILE HE CERTAINLY DID NOT WISH TO BELIEVE IT, IF THIS WAS THE TRUE ATTITUDE OF AMERICAN IT WOULD SEEM STRANGE THAT WE SHOULD TURN TO HIM NOW FOR A DEFINITE ANSWER ON THE NUCLEAR MATTER.

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10. I HAD EXPECTED BHUTTO TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF A CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE, BUT HAD NOT ANTICIPATED HIS LAST REMARK ABOVE, WHICH I CAN ONLY ATTRIBUTE TO HIS FATIGUE AND GENERAL STATE OF STRAIN. I QUICKLY TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON THE MATTER OF CONGRATULATIONS. I HAD ASKED FOR A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY AFTER ELECTIONS AND HAD RECEIVED A REPLY THAT WASHINGTON FELT IT MORE APPROPRIATE TO SEND CONGRATULATIONS WHEN HE WAS FORMALLY GIVEN HIS SECOND TERM AS PRIME MINISTER BY THE PARLIAMENT, WHICH WAS OF COURSE ANTICIPATED SOON. FROM A PROTOCOLSENSE THIS WAS OF COURSE ENTIRELY PROPER. I SAID THIS RESPONSE HAD BEEN BEFORE ANY REPORTING FROM HERE ON POST-ELECTION PROBLEMS IN PAKISTAN. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF ACCEPTING THIS AND SEEMED RELIEVED. (THIS OF COURSE IS NOT QUITE THE WAY IT HAPPENED, BUT IT SEEMED TO ME THE BEST THING TO DO IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. I HOPE YOU CAN AGREE TO THIS AS PARTY LINE AND IN NO WAY DEVIATE FROM IT WITH THE PAK EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, OTHERWISE MY CREDIBILITY WITH BHUTTO, WHICH I DO NOT WANT TO LOSE EVEN AT THIS JUNCTURE, COULD BE DAMAGED.)

PART II

11. AS YOU CAN SEE BY NOW, OUR DISCUSSIONS HAD QUICKLY DEVIATED TO THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN AS SUMMARIZED ABOVE. PRIOR TO THAT TIME, HOWEVER, BHUTTO HAD READ AND DIGESTED THE TALKING POINTS I HAD FOR HIM ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. WHEN WE RETURNED TO IT, I TOLD HIM THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE ONLY TWO POINTS REQUIRED NOW FOR DECISION. ONE WAS THE MODALITIES AS TO HOW WE GET OUR TALKS STARTED, AND THE OTHER WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY TRANSFER OF EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEAR FUTURE WHICH COULD IN FACT VITIATE THE TALKS. BHUTTO NEVER QUITE ACCEPTED THE VALIDITY OR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LATTER POINT.

12. AS REGARDS THE LATTER, BHUTTO SAID HE HAD ALWAYS ANSWERED ME HONESTLY AS TO THE EXACT STATUS OF THE MOVEMENT OF THINGS WITH THE FRENCH, BUT HE HAD NEVER GIVEN AN ORDER FOR DELAY. FURTHERMORE, HE COULD NOT SEE WHY THAT WAS NECESSARY. IN MY SECRET

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TALKING POINTS THERE WAS AN ASSERTION OF OUR NEED TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE HAD BEEN INITIATED. WHY, HE WONDERED, IF WE AGREED TO START TALKS AND ACTUALLY STARTED THEM, WOULD IT BE NECESSARY TO DELAY ANYTHING WITH THE FRENCH? OUR TALKS COULD COVER ALL POSSIBILITIES AND HE COULD NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND WHY THE SHIPMENT OF SOME PIECE OF EQUIPMENT WOULD BE IMPORTANT UNTIL THE OUTCOME OF OUR TALKS WAS KNOWN.

13. IT WAS NECESSARY THAT I COVER THE PROBLEM OF PENDING SHIPMENTS OF EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY FROM FRANCE, IN CONNECTION WITH OUR SYMINGTON AMENDMENT, MORE FULLY THAN YOU HAD WISHED IN YOUR INSTRUCTIONS. BHUTTO'S GENERAL STANCE OF DELAY WAS SUCH

THAT MY WHOLE EFFORT WITH HIM WOULD HAVE SEEMED POINTLESS IN HIS CURRENT SITUATION IF I HAD NOT EMPHASIZED THIS PROBLEM. (HE ONCE ASKED, FOR INSTANCE, WHY COULD WE NOT WAIT UNTIL HE GOT HIS NEW CABINET IN POSITION SO THAT HE COULD HANDLE THIS PROBLEM ADEQUATELY.) IT WAS CLEAR FROM THIS DISCUSSION, AS FROM OTHER REMARKS REPORTED BELOW, THAT BHUTTO IS VERY RELUCTANT TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVE TO ASK THE FRENCH FOR DELAY. THIS MAY BE BECAUSE HE THINKS THAT A POSTPONEMENT ON HIS PART WOULD BE AN ADMISSION, PRIOR TO TALKS WITH US, THAT HE IS IN FACT BACKING OUT OF THE WHOLE DEAL AND WOULD AGREE TO INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT, AND THAT THIS WOULD AFFECT HIS ENTIRE POSITION. I THINK IT MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT HE STILL HOPES THAT WE CAN ACCEPT HIS POSITION OF ADDITIONAL SAFE-GUARDS OR IN SOME MANNER OR OTHER REACH AGREEMENT WITH US THAT WOULD PREVENT HIM FROM HAVING TO TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION OF BACKING DOWN. AT ONE POINT HE SAID "GIVE ME A CHANCE TO TRYING TO FIND A "NEATER" WAY OUT OF THIS WHOLE MESS THAN COMPLETE ABDICATION."

14. BHUTTO SAID HE HAD NO QUARREL WITH THE PRESIDENT'S NON--PROLIFERATION POSITION, AND NO DESIRE AT ALL TO SEE PAKISTAN APPARENTLY STAND IN OPPOSITION TO THE WORTHY GOALS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED BY HIM. (HE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE ANY BRAZILIAN TYPE PUBLIC STATEMENTS.) HE SAID HE HAD A FEELING HE COULD CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT OF THIS IF AN OPPORTUNITY WERE AT ALL POSSIBLE.

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HE SAID HE KNEW OF COURSE THAT PAKISTAN COULD NOT RECEIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION ON OUR NEW PRESIDENT'S AGENDA OF PROBLEMS OR VISITS. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMED RATHER UNREASONABLE TO HIM THAT WE COULD NOT IN THE INTERIM PROCEED ON OTHER LEVELS LEADING UP TO THE OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO PRESENT HIS CASE AS FROM ONE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT TO ANOTHER, EVEN IF WE COULD NOT REACH THIS POINT FOR MANY MONTHS. I SAID I COULD ONLY HOPE THERE COULD BE SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY, AND THAT SUCH TALKS COULD BE FRUITFUL AND BENEFICIAL

BUT THAT I COULD NOT FORGET THE SHORT-TERM INTERIM PROBLEMS WE WERE FACED WITH. IN ANY EVENT, I SAID ANY SUCH HIGH LEVEL TALKS SHOULD HAVE ADVANCE PREPARATION AND IT WOULD BE BETTER TO CLARIFY THINGS AND CLEAR AWAY THE UNDER BRUSH AS FAR AS WE COULD. BHUTTO SAID HE THOUGHT HE WOULD NEVER FEEL SATISFIED THAT THIS WHOLE PROBLEM COULD BE PUT IN ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE WITHOUT FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSIONS IN WHICH HE COULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERSONALLY PRESENT HIS POINT OF VIEW.

15. AS REGARDS INITIATION OF OUR DIALOGUE, WE QUICKLY AGREED THAT THERE WAS ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES. A DELEGATION FROM WASHINGTON, ONE FROM HERE TO WASHINGTON, OR THE USE OF DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. BHUTTO EXPRESSED A CONCERN OVER THE PUBLICITY THAT WOULD OBVIOUSLY RESULT FROM VISITING DELEGATIONS, CITING PRESS REPORTS OF THE COMPLICATIONS OF THAT PROCESS AS REGARDS BRAZIL. HE DID NOT HOWEVER RULE OUT SUCH A POSSIBILITY.

16. IN TURNING TO THE USE OF DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS HE ASKED WHAT WOULD BE WRONG WITH DOING IT HERE BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, JUST AS WE HAD IN THE PAST, AS THIS GAVE HIM THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING HIS ADVISERS ACCESSIBLE TO ASSIST HIM. AT THIS POINT I HAD NO ALTER-NATIVE (AND IT IS ABOUT THE WORST WAY IT COULD HAVE ARISEN) TO TELL HIM THAT I WAS DEPARTING THIS POST SOON, AND I GAVE HIM THE APRIL 13 DATE.

17. AFTER THIS SUBJECT WAS EXHAUSTED, BHUTTO SAID HE WAS AT A GREAT DISADVANTAGE AS TO HOW TO PROCEED AS AGHA SHAHI AND AZIZ
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AHMED WERE BOTH GONE AND HE HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO AT THIS POINT I TOLD HIM I WAS IN NO WAY PRESSING HIM FOR AN ANSWER AT THE MOMENT. I SUGGESTED THAT WE CONSIDER OUR TALK AS PRELIMINARY, AND I WOULD REPORT IT AS SUCH, UNTIL HE COULD CONSULT WITH HIS ADVISERS. I ASKED IF IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HIM FOR ME TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH HIS FOREIGN SECRETARY AND MINISTER AFTER THEY RETURNED AND THEN COME BACK TO HIM. AFTER SOME HESITATION HE SAID THIS PROCEDURE WOULD BE HELPFUL, AND WE AGREED ON THAT. I WILL BE DOING THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

18. MY APPROACH WILL BE TO GO OVER THE TALKING POINTS WITH AZIZ AHMED AND AGHA SHAHI, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DELAY OF ADDITIONAL TRANSFERS. GIVEN BHUTTO'S OBVIOUS RELUCTANCE ON THIS POINT, I THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE ADDRESS THIS QUESTION FRONTALLY AND FORCEFULLY. FOLLOWING THESE TALKS, I WILL RETURN TO BHUTTO AND SEE IF I CAN MOVE HIM FROM HIS NEGATIVE, IF PRELIMINARY, STANCE. I WILL OF COURSE ALSO TRY TO NAIL DOWN HIS PREFERENCE FOR THE MODALITIES OF FURTHER OFFICIAL TALKS.

19. IT IS TOO EARLY IN THIS COMPLICATED LOCAL SITUATION TO GIVE YOU ANY FIRM CONCLUSIONS. BHUTTO CLEARLY DOES NOT WANT TO TAKE ON ANOTHER LIABILITY JUST NOW. HE IS FIGHTING FOR DELAY AND A CHANCE AFTER THAT TO MAKE HIS POSITION UNDERSTANDABLE TO OUR NEW ADMINISTRATION, WHOM HE FEELS SO FAR HE DOES NOT KNOW, AND HAS NO REAL IDENTITY WITH. THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT TO HIM THAN THE MERE PROVISION, IN EITHER FINANCIAL OR OTHER TERMS, OF ANY "PACKAGE" WE MAY OFFER HIM. JUST HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS I DO NOT KNOW - BUT THIS IS INDEED THE ESSENCE OF OUR PROBLEM, AND I HOPE WE CAN UNDERSTAND THIS.

BYROADE

UNQUOTE VANCE

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